

THE
DOCTRINE
OF
REPROBATION

BRIEFLY CONSIDERED:

BEING THE
Substance of some LECTURES
IN
HARVARD COLLEGE.

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Cuthbert *C. Brown*

T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE Subject of the following Pages was as much disputed in the last century, as perhaps any one controverted point in divinity ; and very often, with too much warmth and uncharitableness. When it came in my way in the course of my public lectures, some time before the last winter vacation, I could not avoid considering it ; but I determined to do it as briefly as would be consistent with giving the Students of the College any tolerable view of the arguments and objections of the contending parties. And these I exhibited, in a great measure, tho' not always exactly, in their own words.

SOON after delivering the last of my lectures upon the subject, I was very unexpectedly surprized with a request from some of my hearers, who told me it was also the desire of many others, that I would consent to their being made public by the press. I put them off from time to time for several months, in hopes they would grow cool and drop the motion ; but finding it quite otherwise, I at length yielded with reluctance to repeated solicitations.

I SHALL

The PREFACE.

I SHALL not wonder if I am censured by some of all parties, for offering but a very small part of what *they* could have said for themselves. It would have been easy to have heaped up much more on every side; but I was unwilling to tire my audience with the length of a difficult argument; which, for the sake of some, into whose hands it may now fall, I have made much shorter than it was delivered in the college: For I am sensible that controversial tracts soon become tedious to persons who have not been used to close and long attention.

As I was far from expecting that I should ever be desired to publish what is here emitted, I was not careful, when writing, to note in the margin from whom I made extracts; and I have not been able now, at six months distance, to recollect some of them, and give them credit for what was taken from them.

If a view of the difficulty of the subject here considered, may be improved to promote charity between such as differ in their sentiments about it; or if any serious enquirers for truth, shall find assistance in their search after it, from what is here put into their hands; I shall be humbly thankful to God for it, and not be sorry that I consented to permit, what at the time of doing it, I had much rather have forborn.

*The Doctrine of REPROBATION
considered with Candor.*

PART I.

JUDE, ver. IV.

FOR there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

HAVING spoken largely of the doctrine of *Election* in several late discourses; I must now proceed to consider the doctrine of *Reprobation* also, and see what account the scriptures give us of it. And I do this the rather, because I believe it is very much owing to misapprehensions, or want of due consideration of what the scriptures teach us concerning the *latter* of these points; that so many prejudices have arisen in the minds of men against the whole doctrine of the divine decrees.—Now the words which have been read at this time, may serve well enough as an *Introduction* to the scripture account of *Reprobation*.

IN

IN the preceding verse the apostle tells those to whom he directs his epistle, that *it was needful for him to write unto them, and exhort them, that they should contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.* The reason why this exhortation was so necessary, we have in the words before us, *For there are certain men crept in unawares—ungodly men—denying the only Lord God, &c.* There were certain men, ungodly in life, and damnably heretical in doctrine, who had craftily slipt into the church unobserved. And there was great danger lest by the wicked practices and damnable heresies, which *these brought in privily; others also should be induced to put away a good conscience, and make shipwreck of their faith.* And lest any should think it was *only a chance which had happened unto them* that the church was at this time so infested with these *deceitful workers, and sons of perdition*; the apostle therefore assures them, that this whole matter came to pass *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*; that these very men *were before of old ordained to this condemnation.* Nor need any wonder to hear him say so, for it was nothing but what had been spoken of before by the apostles of our Lord; v. 14. And even *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, had prophesied of them.* v. 17.

BY the condemnation to which these men were before of old ordained—some understand, that *reprobate mind* to which God gave them over to do those things which are not convenient, and to corrupt and pervert the doctrines of

of the gospel.—Others understand *the just dereliction of God*, by which they were permitted, for their former sins, to make shipwreck of their *own faith*, and to become the authors of damnable error and heresy in *others*, and at last to be condemned themselves forever.—In fine, *by this condemnation*, some understand *eternal damnation itself*. For so the original word *κρίσις* is often used elsewhere in the New Testament.* And it is certain from the whole progress of *this epistle*, that the apostle *Jude* is here speaking of those very persons, as *already crept* into the church, whom the apostle *Peter* had foretold *would creep into it*; and concerning whom he says, that *their judgment now of a long time lingreth not, and their damnation slumbreth not.* 2 Pet. II. 3. Upon the whole, in whichever of these senses we take the expression, it will amount to much the same thing. For if by *this condemnation* we understand, either only the *divine dereliction*, or only *that reprobate mind* consequent upon it; yet we must understand it of *such a reprobate mind*, or *such a dereliction*, as will certainly end in *the damnation of hell*; because the apostle expressly tells us, [ver. 13.] that *to the persons under this condemnation is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*

AND to this condemnation, he says, they were *before of old ordained*, or, as it is in the original, *πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι before of old written.* That is, say some, *καὶ ὡς προγεγραπ.* concerning whom it was *before*

* Vid. Matt. XXIII. 14. Mark XII. 40. Luke XX. 47.
Rom. III. 8. 1 Tim. III. 6.

before written. Thus they suppose it was in those remarkable words of the apostle Paul, 2 Thes. II. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. *And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* The same persons they suppose to have been written of before by Peter also, when he says, 2 Pet. II. 1, 2, 3. *There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingreth not, and their damnation slumbreth not.*—Others again suppose, that the expression refers to the words of our blessed Saviour recorded Matt. XXIV. 4, 5, 10, 11, 14. *Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall*

shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.—And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.

Now tho' it be certain, that *Peter* (at least) had written before of these very persons, and of their condemnation to eternal punishment; who are here said to be *before of old written to this condemnation*: Yet I cannot perswade myself, that they are said to be *before of old written to this condemnation*, upon account of them and their condemnation's having been written of before by *Peter*, or any other apostle. For what had been written by *Peter*, or possibly by any other apostle, concerning these persons, could not be said to have been written *of old*, but *of late*, when *Jude* wrote this epistle.—Moreover, the prophecies which went before concerning these persons, and their condemnation, are manifestly spoken of as a thing distinct from their being *before of old ordained or written to condemnation*. For after the apostle hath said, that the men who were crept in unawares, were *before of old ordained to condemnation*; he goes on to say, v. 14. *And Enoch also the seventh from Adam prophesied of these.* And then he proceeds, v. 17, 18, to put his beloved in remembrance of the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: *How that they told them there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate them-*
B *selves—*

selves—not having the spirit.—From all which it appears to me that their being *before of old ordained* or *written to condemnation*, must be understood according to the sense, of perhaps the bigger and better part of protestant expositors of the last century, to refer, not to any thing which had been spoken or written about these persons, either by prophets or apostles under the inspiration of God; but to the determination of the divine mind concerning them, namely, to the decree of *Reprobation* (as it hath been called) which was *before of old*, even from the days of eternity.—This may suffice for the meaning of the *Condemnation* spoken of in my text; and of *certain men's being before of old ordained to it.*—The next thing to be considered is,

THE character of the persons ordained to this condemnation.—And this is, *ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ:* or as the apostle *Peter* prophesying of the same persons expresses it, 2 Pet. ii. 1. *False teachers who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them.*—The sum of the matter then may be taken up in the two following propositions, namely,—

I. *THAT there are certain men from eternity ordained of God to condemnation.*—And,

II. *THAT these are men of wicked lives, or damnably heretical principles, or both.*—The great controversy between the *Supralapsarian Calvinists* and the *Arminians* concerning the decree of *Reprobation*, will fall in most naturally

to be discussed under the second of these propositions. However it may not be amiss, before I proceed to that, to speak something briefly to the first, viz.

I. *THAT* there are certain men from eternity ordained of God to condemnation.—*The election* (says the apostle) *bath obtained it, and the rest were blinded, or hardned.* Rom. xi. 7. And again, Rom. ix. 22. *What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.*—The proposition before us may be illustrated and prov'd under three particulars, viz.

1. *THAT* some of mankind are certainly ordain'd of God to condemnation.

2. *THAT* this divine ordination is from eternity.—And,

3. *THAT* the persons so ordained to condemnation are determined.—What I intend by each of these, I think will be almost allowed me by all parties, except Socinians.

1st THEN, *Some of mankind are certainly ordained of God to condemnation.*—By *condemnation* I intend *eternal damnation* itself; or that misery which will be the everlasting portion of them, who die in their sins. By being *ordained* to this misery or condemnation, I intend, that *there is a determination of the divine will concerning it*; that none drop into perdition without the will of God, or without his antecedently determining (in some sense) *that they should*. Not that the determination of the divine will is

either the moral or the physical cause of mens sin and misery. The *Calvinists* generally reject such a thought as this. And I here only suppose, that a determination of the will of God, is necessarily antecedent to the condemnation of men; that since *the kingdom of God ruleth over all, so that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him*; much less can any of his reasonable creatures perish, without his determining before, at least to permit that they should.

Now it is certain that some of mankind shall be miserable forever, from the express words of our blessed Lord, Matt. xxv. 46. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment*: And if some of mankind shall be miserable forever, we must suppose they are antecedently ordained of God to this condemnation; or else we must suppose that God don't know of it before it happens; or lastly, that tho' he knows of it, yet he is not able to prevent it. For if God knows of mens falling into condemnation before it happens; and could prevent it, if he thought fit; we must certainly conclude, that he determines not to prevent, but suffer it (which is all I intend by ordaining or writing it) or else it could never happen. Now that God knows of mens falling into condemnation before it happens is certain, from his foretelling of it: And it is no less certain that he could prevent it, if (all things consider'd) he judg'd it wisest and best so to do; for all things are possible with him; and especially the hearts of all men are in his hands, and he can turn them whithersoever he pleases. And therefore,

therefore, it cannot but be allowed, that he determines not to prevent it ; or in other words, by which I intend the same thing, that they who fall into condemnation, are ordained of God to it, not by an *effective*, but *only* by a *permissive* decree.—I proceed to say

2. *THAT this divine ordination is from eternity. Or that God hath from eternity determined to permit some of mankind to fall into condemnation.*

THE truth of this will appear undeniably from considering the perfection of the knowledge and power of God. For it is impossible to suppose that he, *whose kingdom ruleth over all*, and who is able to prevent what he pleases, should know that any thing will come to pass, which he does not at the same time determine to permit, and not to hinder. And therefore, since God did from eternity know of the falling of some of mankind into everlasting condemnation, he must from eternity have determined to permit it.

3. *THE very persons so ordained or written to condemnation are determined.*—This likewise follows from the certainty and exactness of the foreknowledge of God. For whether we suppose the decree of God to be antecedent in order of nature to his foreknowledge, or his foreknowledge antecedent to his decree, (which it would be beside my purpose to dispute here) yet since he knows beforehand the very persons, who will fall into condemnation ; he must determine beforehand, at least to permit those very persons so to do.

UPON

UPON the whole, if some of mankind are certainly ordained, or written of God to condemnation ; if this divine ordination is from eternity ; and if the very persons so ordained or written to condemnation are determined ; then it is true that there are certain men from eternity ordained or written of God to condemnation ; which was my first proposition.—I shall conclude at present, with just observing, *that this doctrine, as I have explained it, is far from making God the author of those sins which he hath determined to punish everlastingly.*—For the dimmest eye may see, that ‘ they who affirm, ‘ that God hath from eternity decreed to permit ‘ those sins to be committed, which he certainly ‘ knew would be committed if he prevented ‘ them not ; and that he accordingly does permit them, do not hereby make him the *author* ‘ of sin. God’s suffering his creatures to sin, ‘ when it is in his power to hinder them, is not ‘ to be the author of sin, nor is God in *justice*, ‘ or in *mercy* obliged to exert his power in hindring persons (in a state of trial) from sinning, ‘ tho’ he knows they will sin if he does not, and ‘ that their sinning will bring ruin upon them.’ If it was inconsistent with the *justice* or *mercy* of God, to leave creatures in a *state of trial*, to exercise the freedom of their own wills, whatever the foreseen event may be ; it would be inconsistent with the *wisdom* of God, ever to put any of his creatures in a *state of trial for eternity*.

PART II.

IN the former part I proposed to consider the two following propositions, viz.

I. *THAT there are certain men, from eternity, ordain'd of God to condemnation.*—And

II. *THAT these are men of wicked lives, or damnably heretical principles, or both.*—The first of these propositions, viz.

THAT there are certain men, from eternity, ordain'd of God to condemnation, hath been dispatch'd.

—By the *condemnation* to which these men are *ordained*, I have explained my self to mean, *eternal damnation* itself, or that misery which will be the everlasting portion of those, who die in their sins.

—For whether *this* be the primary intention, or not, of the condemnation spoken of in my text; yet it is, at least, *such a condemnation*, as will certainly end in *this*; since the apostle tells us v. 13. that to the persons under this condemnation is *reserved the blackness of darkness forever*.

By being *ordained of God to this condemnation*, I have said that I intend, not that the determination of the divine will, is either the moral, or physical cause of mens sin and misery; but only, that a determination of the will of God, is necessarily

necessarily antecedent to the condemnation of men; that since *the kingdom of God ruleth over all; so that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him*; much less can any of his reasonable creatures perish, without God's determining before, at least to permit that they should.

* 'Things which happen thus, under a permissive and directing providence, are ascrib'd in scripture to the will and counsel of God. For a *permissive* and directing will, is as really a will, as an *effective* one; tho' it be not alike causal.' And what comes to pass according to it, may therefore, in some sense, be said to be *ordained of God*.

THIS *divine ordination*, I have proved to be *from eternity*; and that it reaches to *the very individual persons*, who shall go away into *everlasting punishment*, upon the judicial sentence of the great day.—I proceed now to the second proposition, which is

II. *THAT they who are thus ordained of God to condemnation, are men of wicked lives, or damnably heretical principles, or both.*—My text calls them *ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*. And the apostle *Peter* prophesying of the same persons, tells us, that *they shall privily bring in damnable heresies*. 2 Pet. II. 1. So that the persons, whom my text immediately refers to, were both ungodly in life, and damnably heretical in doctrine. And one, or the other, or both of these, is certainly the case of all, who were before of old

old ordained of God to condemnation. But here the great question arises, upon which the controversy about the doctrine of reprobation very much turns, viz.

*Whether God hath ordained certain men to condemnation upon a foresight of their ungodliness and infidelity? or whether the ungodliness and infidelity of men are in consequence of their having been before of old ordained to condemnation, and follow such ordination necessarily?—*The *Arminians* maintain the former, the *Supralapsarian Calvinists* the latter; and both of them go great lengths in the prosecution of their opposite schemes. The *Sublapsarian Calvinists* take a middle way, which (to me at least) appears to be much more agreeable to the scriptures, and to our natural notions of the divine perfections; and to be free from the principal difficulties, with which the two other schemes are encumbered.

THE *Supralapsarians* then affirm, that the decree of God is in order of nature antecedent to his foreknowledge, and that his foreknowledge is founded in it; that the will of God is *universally efficacious*, and is the first cause of all things; that if the reason of the being of things be followed up to the top, we shall find it in the decree; that there are a vast company of possible beings in the knowledge or understanding of God; and that the decree appoints which of them shall be; and therefore by the decree they pass from possibility to futurity! *—And in consequence of these positions they affirm, that God does by an efficacious power and influence

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* Vid. Willard p. 102, 103.

move and prædetermine men, unto all their natural actions, even those that have sin inseparably annexed to them; that he secretly, but effectually inclines and applies the wills of men to the entative acts of such things.* And to avoid the consequence of making God the author of sin, they make a distinction between *the positive act of sin*, which they say is not evil; and *the want of its conformity to the law of God*, which being a negation, is no positive being; so that it is not produced. And thus, tho' the action is produced jointly by God as the first cause, and by the creature as the second, yet God is not guilty of sin, but only the creature.†—— To this the *Arminians* reply,

THAT as for that *nicety* of saying that the evil of sin consists in a negation, which is not a positive being, so that tho' God should determine men to the action which is sinful; yet he is not concerned in the sin of it: They think it is too metaphysical, to put the honour of God and his attributes upon such a subtlety. For in sins against moral laws, there seems to be an antecedent immorality in the action itself, which is inseparable from it.—But supposing that sin consisted in a negative, yet that privation does immediately and necessarily result out of the action, without any other thing whatsoever intervening. So that if God does infallibly determine a sinner to commit the action to which that guilt belongs, tho' that should be a sin, only by reason of a privation, which is dependent on it; yet

* Vid. GALE'S Court of the Gentiles, Part 4th, p. 27. 73.

† BURNET'S Exposit. p. 147.

yet it does not appear but that he is really the author of sin ; since if he is the author of the sinful action, on which the sin depends as a shadow on its substance, he must be esteemed (say they) the author of the sin, if this hypothesis be true.—And tho' it may be said, that sin being a violation of God's law, he himself, who is not bound by his law, cannot be guilty of sin ; yet an action which is immoral, is so essentially opposite to infinite perfection, that God cannot be capable of it ; as being a contradiction to his own nature. Nor is it to be supposed, that he can damn men for that, which is the necessary result of an action, to which he himself determined them.*—Thus the *Arminians* object to the hypothesis of their adversaries.

And *others*, who are far from being *Arminians*, yet think, that the doctrines of *efficacious permission*, and *prædeterminative* concurrence to actions intrinsically evil (which two notions seem inseparably twisted with the *Supralapsarian* scheme) are both of them founded upon *false principles*, and attended with *consequences* too shocking to be endured.

THE *true principles* (say they) upon which these notions seem to be founded, are,

I. *THAT* God cannot form a creature with a power of moving itself, and determining any of its own actions ; without his *efficacious power* and influence, first moving and prædetermining it to the substrate matter of them. And,

II. *THAT* it is impossible he should fore-know any action of a free agent, but what he

hath determined secretly and effectually to incline and apply its will to the performance of.— Now the *former of these principles* (say they) cannot be true, because it destroys the distinction between *natural* and *voluntary* agents; and brings all the operations of the *latter*, under laws of equal necessity with those, according to which the motions of the *former* are excited.— Nor is *the latter principle* any more necessary to be admitted. For tho' it be readily granted, that God's præscience of things future is so far founded on his decree, as that it is impossible he should know any thing as future, but what he hath determined either to effect or permit; yet it won't from hence follow, that he cannot foreknow any action of a free agent, but what he hath determined secretly and effectually to incline and apply its will to the performance of. For it is evident from the scriptures, that God not only knows what *possibly might*, but even what *certainly would* have been determined by free agents, if the antecedent course of things had been otherwise disposed than it was. He answered *David*, that *Saul would come to Keilah*, and that *the men of Keilah would deliver him up*.* And yet both the one and the other was upon condition of his staying there; and he going from thence, neither the one nor the other ever happened. So God knew, that *if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in Chorazin and Bethsaida, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes*. And that, *if the mighty works which*

were

were done in Capernaum, had been done even in Sodom, it would have remained to our Saviour's day.*—Now if his knowledge reaches to such things as these, which never happen; it can't be thought strange, that it should reach to such determinations as do happen, even where he don't exert his own power to lead men into them. And therefore, from God's foreknowledge and permissive decree, we can never infer, that he does by an *efficacious influence* move and determine men to all their actions; even to those which have sin inseparably annexed to them.—But this may suffice for the principles upon which the doctrines of *efficacious permission* and *predeterminative concurrence* to evil actions are supposed to be founded.

As for the *shocking consequences*, with which they are thought, by others beside Arminians, to be chargeable, I shall represent some of them in the words of the learned and judicious Mr. Howe,† which are better than any of my own. These sentiments (says he) must, I conceive to an impartial understanding, leave it no way sufficiently explicable; how the influence and concurrence which the holy God hath to the worst of actions, is to be distinguished from that which he affords to the best; or wherein such inherently evil actions are less to be imputed to him, who forbids them; than to the malicious tempter, who prompts to them; or the actor who does them; or wherein not a great deal more. And they leave it undeniable, that the matter of his laws to Adam and his posterity, was an utter impossibility;

* Matt. XI. 21, 23. † Vol. II. P. 501.

impossibility ; nothing being more apparently so, than either not to do an action, whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power ; or to separate the malignity thereof, from an intrinsically evil action. And this *utter impossibility of not sinning*, was the ineluctable fate of his (at first) innocent creatures ; who must also (upon this hypothesis) be understood to be irreversibly condemned to the suffering of eternal punishment, for the doing of what it was (upon these terms) so absolutely impossible to them to avoid.—These consequences (if justly drawn from the doctrines abovementioned, as I think they are) must be sufficient to satisfy any reasonable man, that those doctrines cannot be true. Indeed, I know very well, that the maintainers of the doctrines reject and abhor these consequences ; but the question is, whether they have ever yet been able, with all the nice distinctions, and metaphysical subtleties, which they make use of upon this occasion, satisfactorily to clear themselves from them. For fear, as it seems, of these difficulties in the *Supralapsarian* scheme, the *Arminians* go into extremes on the other hand, which I shall give some account of in the next part.

PART III.

PART III.

THE *Supralapsarian Scheme*, so far as it obviously refers to the question under consideration, hath been exhibited ; together with some of those difficulties, wherewith its adversaries endeavour to perplex and oppress it. I shall now endeavour in like manner, faithfully to set forth the *hypothesis* of the *Arminians* in the case before us ; and shall mention some of the difficulties with which *that* also is pressed by its adversaries.

THE *Arminians* then affirm,* that God considered all the free motions of those rational agents, that he did intend to create ; and according to what he foresaw they would chuse and do, in all the various circumstances in which he might put them, formed his decrees : That he intended in particular to create all men free, and to deal with them according to the use that they should make of their liberty : That therefore he foreseeing how every one would use it, did upon that decree all things which concerned them in this life, together with their salvation or damnation in the next ; that sufficient assistances are given to every man ; but that all may chuse whether they will use them, and persevere in

in them, or not: And that no man is under irresistible motions, either to good or evil. * Nor can it be thought that grace is so efficacious of itself, as to determine us ; otherwise why are we required *not to grieve God's Spirit*? Why is it said, *Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ; as your fathers did, so do ye*? † How often would I have gathered you under my wings but ye would not? ‡ What more could I have done in my vineyard, that hath not been done in it? || These (say they) seem to be plain intimations of a power in us, by which we not only can, but often do resist the motions of grace.

Now if the determining efficacy of grace is not acknowledged, it will be yet much harder to believe that we are efficaciously determined to Sin. This seems to be not only contrary to the purity and holiness of God, but is so manifestly contradictory to the whole strain of the scriptures, which every where charge sin upon men, that in so copious a subject it is not necessary to multiply proofs. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.* ** And, *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.* †† *Why will you die O house of Israel?* ‡‡—This is the hypothesis of the *Arminians* relating to the question under consideration. I have expressed it mostly in their own words, as it is set down by the learned and catholic-spirited Bishop Burnet, who was in the main on their side of the question ; and therefore may very well be supposed to have stated their notions truly.

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* Burnet's Exp. p. 160, 161. † Acts vii. 51. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 37.
 || Isai. v. 4. ** Hos. xiii. 9. †† John v. 40. ‡‡ Ezek. xxiii. 11.

I SHALL now go on to collect pretty much from the same learned writer, the objections of the *Supralapsarians* to these things. For it must be allowed, that he hath set forth the principles, arguments and objections of the *Supralapsarians*, as well as *Arminians*, with great clearness, and strength, and spirit.— However, I cannot help remarking, that (by what means soever it came to pass) he hath not done the like justice to the *Sublapsarian* scheme; but hath set that in a weak imperfect light, and placed the maintainers of it between the two other contending parties, as well-meaning men, who have but very little to say for themselves. Whether this be their case will appear hereafter.

THE *Supralapsarians* then reply to the *Hypothesis* above, that there can be no certain prescience of future contingencies; that it implies a contradiction, that things which are not certainly to be, should be certainly foreseen; for if they are certainly foreseen, they must certainly be: So while they are supposed to be contingent, they are yet affirmed to be certain, by saying that they are certainly foreseen. When God decrees that any thing shall be, it hath from that a certain futurity, and as such it is certainly foreseen by him. An uncertain foresight is an act in its nature imperfect, because it may be a mistake, and so is inconsistent with the divine perfections. And it seems to imply a contradiction to say that a thing happens freely, that is, may be, or

may not be, and yet that it is certainly foreseen by God. God (say they) cannot foresee things, but as he decrees them, and so gives them a futurity, and therefore this prescience antecedent to his decree, must be rejected as a thing impossible.

THEY say further, that decrees upon a foresight of what men will do, if they did not involve any contradictions are yet imperfect in their nature, and subject the will and acts of God to a creature, and so are inconsistent with the independency of the nature and will of God. And that such a conditionate decree is an act in suspense, whether it shall be or not, and therefore inconsistent with infinite perfection.

AND as to what the *Arminians* say concerning the inefficacy and resistibleness of divine grace, they object, that the scriptures teach us every where to offer up all praise and glory to God ; to acknowledge that all is of him, and to humble ourselves, as being nothing before him. Now if we were elected, not by a free act of his, but by what he foresaw that we would be ; so that his grace is not efficacious by its own force, but by the good use that we make of it ; then the glory and praise of all the good we do, and of God's kind purposes to us, were due to ourselves. He designs, according to the other doctrine, equally well to all men ; and all the difference among them will arise neither from God's intention to them, nor from his assistances ; but
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from the good use that he foresaw they would make of these favours, which he was to give in common to all mankind. Man should have whereof to glory, and he might say, that *he made himself to differ from others*. The whole strain of the scripture in ascribing all good things to God, and in charging us to offer up the Honour of all to him, seems very expressly against such doctrine; since if all our good is from God, and is particularly owing to his grace; then good men have something from God, which bad men have not, for which they ought to praise him. The style of all the prayers that are used, or directed to be used in the scriptures, is for a grace that *opens our eyes, that turns our hearts, that makes us to go, that leads us not into temptation, but delivers us from evil*: All these phrases do plainly import, that we desire more than such a power or capacity to act, as is given to *all men*; and such, as after we have received it, may still be ineffectual to us. For to pray for such assistances, as are always given to all men, and are such that the whole good of them shall wholly depend upon ourselves, would sound very odly; whereas in truth we pray for *something that is special, and that we hope shall be effectual*. We do not, we cannot pray in earnest for that, which we know all men, as well as we ourselves, have at all times. Humility and earnestness in prayer seem to be among the chief means of working in us the image of Christ, and of deriving to us all

the blessings of heaven. That doctrine therefore which blasts both, which swells us up with an opinion, that all which is *peculiar* comes from ourselves, and that we receive nothing from God, but what is given in common with us to all the world, is certainly contrary both to the spirit and design of the gospel.

THE grace of God in scripture is set forth by such figures and expressions, as do plainly intimate its *efficacy*; and that it does not depend on us to use it, or not to use it, at our pleasure. It is said to be a creation, *We are created unto good works,* * and *we become new creatures.* † It is called a *Regeneration* or a *new birth.* ‡ It is called a *quickning*, and a *resurrection*; as our former state is compared to feebleness, a blindness, and a death. God is said to *work in us both to will and to do.* *His people shall be willing in the day of his power.* || *He will write his laws in their hearts, and make them to walk in them.* § Mankind is compared to a *mass of clay in the hand of the potter*, †† who of the *same lump* makes at pleasure, *vessels of honour, or of dishonour.* These passages, this last in particular, do intimate an absolute and a conquering power in grace. And that *the love of God constrains us*, as St. Paul expressly speaks.

AFTER all, they think, that if a debate falls to be between the sovereignty, acts and purposes

* Eph. II. 10. † 2 Cor. V. 17. ‡ Phil. II. 3.
 || Psal. CX. 3. § Jer. XXXI. 33, 34. †† Ezek. XXXVI. 26, 27.
 Rom. IX. 2.

purposes of God, and the freedom of man's will; it is modest and decent, rather to make the abatement on man's part, than on God's; but they think there is no need of this. They maintain, that beside the outward enlightning of a man by knowledge, there is an inward enlightning of the mind, and a secret forcible conviction stamped on it. Otherwise what can be meant by the prayer of *Paul* for the Ephesians, who had already heard the gospel preached, and were instructed in it; *That the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know what was the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints: and what was the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe.** This seems to be somewhat that is both internal and efficacious.

IN fine, Christ compares the union and influence that he communicates to believers, to the union of an head with its members, and of a root with its branches; which imports an internal, a vital, and an efficacious influence. And tho' the outward means that are offered, may be, and always are rejected, when not accompanied with this overcoming grace; yet *this* never returns empty. These outward means coming from God, the resisting of them is said to be a *resisting God*;† and *grieving* or *quenching his spirit*;‡ and so in that sense we may resist the grace or favour of God; but we can never withstand him when he intends to overcome us.

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* Eph. I. 17, 18, 19. † Acts VII. 51. ‡ Eph. IV. 30.

BUT this may suffice for the *Supralapsarian* objections against that part of the *Arminian* scheme which relates to the question under consideration.

AND now upon a view of each scheme, and the objections which lie against it, it is obvious to remark,

THAT the Objections of both sides against some part of the scheme of their opponents, are difficult, if not impossible to be answered; which is at least a strong presumption, that there are some things amiss in both schemes. The *Supralapsarian* objections against an election upon a foresight of faith and good works; and their arguments for the freedom, and the efficacy of divine grace (at least in many instances) seem to be of great force, if not irresistible. Nor is there less weight, on the other hand, in what the *Arminians* and others object, against God's concurring immediately by a determinative influence to the production of intrinsically evil actions. And this leads me to observe what seems to me to be the fundamental mistake of both parties in the point before us, which is,

That they are both agreed in joining some things together, which have no connection with each other in the nature of them, and which the scriptures have set far asunder. Or in other words, They are both agreed that *election* and *reprobation* must be set upon much the same foot. And that men must be much alike free, or much alike

alike determined, to all their actions, whether good or evil. And their agreement in these two points, necessarily keeps them at everlasting disagreement in almost all others. Thus for instance, the *Supralapsarian* apprehends it to be impossible, that the *elect* should be *chosen of God* upon a foresight of their *faith* and *good works*; and partly for that reason thinks it to be impossible also, that the reprobate should be *ordained to condemnation* upon a foresight of their *wickedness* and *infidelity*. Whereas, on the other side, the *Arminian* can never persuade himself, that God would ordain *any to condemnation* otherwise than upon a foresight of their *wickedness* or *infidelity*; and therefore he concludes, that neither does he *elect any to everlasting life*, but upon a foresight of their *faith* and *obedience*. And so again, the *Supralapsarian*, that he may the more effectually maintain the *determining efficacy of divine grace*, affirms that *men are determined to the substrate matter of all their actions, even those that are intrinsically evil*. This the *Arminian* thinks is to make *God the author of sin*, and yet seems to allow it to be true upon a supposition of the *determinative efficacy of grace*, and therefore is forced to deny that, and to maintain what the *Supralapsarian* thinks equivalent to saying, that it is *not God*, but *men*, that *make themselves to differ*. And thus from an unhappy agreement in a false supposal or two, they are led into an endless opposition to each other in many other points.

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BUT now the scriptures take a quite different course in treating of the moral good or evil which is in us, or done by us ; ascribing the one to God, and imputing the other to ourselves ; teaching us to ascribe the honour of all that is good to God, and to cast the blame of all that is evil on ourselves ; from whence we have the highest reason to conclude, that God hath not the same influence and causality in the one, which he hath in the other.



P A R T IV.

THE very opposite schemes of the *Supralapsarians* and *Arminians* have both been considered in the foregoing parts, together with some of the difficulties wherewith the two contending parties mutually press each other. My business will now be to exhibit the hypothesis of the *Sublapsarians*, so far as it relates to the question under consideration, and examine how far it escapes the difficulties which attend and perplex either one or t'other of the other schemes.

THE *Sublapsarians* then maintain,

1. *That the Supralapsarian doctrine of God's concurring immediately, by a determinative influence, to the production of all the actions of men, whether good or evil, ought not to be admitted.*— For, they say, this doctrine supposes, that God cannot form a creature with a power of moving itself, and determining any of its own actions,

actions, without his efficacious power and influence first moving and predetermining it to the matter of them ; that this highly reflects on the wisdom and power of God, and entirely takes away the very possibility of exercising divine justice ; it being utterly inconceivable, that any creature should be a proper object of rewards and punishments; which neither hath, nor ever had, or could have, a power of determining any of its own actions. That this doctrine also destroys the distinction between *natural* and *voluntary* agents, and brings all the operations of the *latter*, under laws of equal necessity with those, according to which the motions of the *former* are excited. For if what we call voluntary agents are efficaciously determined by God to all their operations, then they can no more refrain from doing what they do, than the fire can cease from burning, when it is supplied with proper fuel, and fanned with sufficient air.

THE *Sublapsarian Calvinists* farther alledge, that this doctrine of being determined by God to all our actions is AN UTTER STRANGER TO ANTIQUITY. That it was first started by *Aquinas* in the thirteenth century. That before, it was in general held, that the providence of God extended itself to all things whatsoever: *He thought* this was done by God's concurring immediately to the production of every thought, action, motion, or mode; so that God was the first and immediate cause of

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every thing that was done. And in order to the explaining of the joint production of every thing by God as the *FIRST*, and by the creatures as the *second cause*, he taught (at least so his followers have understood him) that by a physical influence the will was pre-determined by God to all things whether good or bad ; so that the will could not be said to be free in that particular instance *in sensu composito*, tho' it was in general still free in all its actions *in sensu diviso* : A distinction so sacred, and so much used among them (' as Bishop Burnet observes) that I chuse to give it in their own terms, rather than translate, or attempt to explain them. This passed down among the *Papists* with the *Dominicans*, who were of *Aquinas's* own order ; and hath since been received by the *Supralapsarian Calvinists* among *Protestants* ; but neither one nor t'other can pretend to any earlier author for it than *Aquinas*.

NOR do the *SCRIPTURES* know any more of this doctrine than the *Fathers* do. Indeed the scriptures teach us, that *in God we live and move*, *Acts* 17. 28. But this can't intend, that God *excites* and *determines* all our motions ; for that would make *Him* much more the author of the worst of our actions, than *we* ourselves are : And therefore the meaning can only be, that as God at first gives us a power of moving, so he continually supports and preserves that power in all its exercises.

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To conclude,* the *Sublapsarians* assert more to be necessary to actions, to which men are wickedly disinclined ; but that less will suffice for their doing of actions, to which they have inclination more than enough. They reckon it sufficient to the production of actions of this latter sort, that a man's powers be actually habile, and apt for any such action in the general, as is con-natural to them, supposing there be not a peccant aversion ; as there is to all those actions, which are holy and spiritual ; which aversion a more potent (even a determinative) influence, may be often necessary to overcome. They explain themselves by instance thus,

A MAN hath from God the powers belonging to his nature, by which he is capable of loving or hating any apprehended good or evil. These powers being by a present divine influence rendered habile, and apt for action, he can now love a good name, health, ease, life ; and hate disgrace, sickness, pain, death ; but he does also by these powers thus habilitated for action, love wickedness and hate God. They say now, that to *these former acts* God should over and besides determine him, is not absolutely and always necessary ; and to the *latter* it is impossible. But that to hate wickedness *universally*, and *as such*, and to love God, the depravedness of his nature by the apostacy, hath made the determinative influence of effi-

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* Mr. Howe, Vol. II. p. 531.

cacious grace often, if not always necessary ; which therefore he hath indispensable obligation (nor is destitute of sufficient encouragement) most earnestly to implore and pray for.

THUS the *Sublapsarians*, while with the *Arminians* they utterly deny any *determinative* divine influence to evil actions, do at the same time with the *Supralapsarians* earnestly maintain the *efficacy* of divine grace, whenever God pleases, and the necessity of its influence in order to our being and doing good. And in this way they think they secure the holiness, justice, and goodness of God from the least imputation ; and yet render all due honour to the freedom and efficacy of his grace. Nor do they at all exempt man hereby, from his dependence on the will and providence of God. For a created being that was entirely from God,* with all the powers and faculties belonging to it, that hath its continual subsistence in him, and all these powers continued and maintained by his influence every moment ; that hath these powers made habile, and apt for all its natural motions and operations whatsoever, by a suitable influence, whensoever it moves and operates ; and that is always under the check and controul of divine providence ; may with great propriety be said to *depend on God* as to all its motions and operations, without being *unavoidably impelled* to do every thing which it does, even its intrinsically evil actions.

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* Mr. Hys Vol. II. p. 527.

To conclude, by maintaining always the necessity, and whenever God pleases, the *efficacy of his grace*, and denying a *determinative* influence to evil actions, the *Sublapsarians* apprehend they avoid the difficulties with which both the other schemes are pressed, by maintaining both, or denying both.

BUT I proceed to say, that in consequence of the *Sublapsarians* denying that men are efficaciously determined by God to all their actions, even those which have sin inseparably annexed to them, they are obliged to maintain,

2. THAT God foreknows what rational agents will do, *when he thinks fit to leave them entirely to the freedom of their own wills, without interposing his own power to determine them one way or the other.* This principle necessarily follows from the former ; for if God does not determine men to their sinful actions, he must either foreknow what they will do, when he don't determine them, or else he must be ignorant beforehand of a great part of the actions of mankind.

'TIS true it is not easy to shew how those future contingencies, which depend upon the free choice of the will, should be certain and infallible ; * but we are from sufficient evidence perswaded that it is so. For we see thro' the whole scriptures a thread of very positive prophecies, the accomplishment whereof depended on the free will of men ; and these predictions, as they were made very precisely,

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* *Burnet's Exposition*, p. 158.

so they were no less punctually accomplished. Not to mention any other prophecies, all those which relate to the death and sufferings of Christ, were fulfilled by the *free acts* of the priests and people of the *Jews* : They sinned in doing it, which proves that they acted in it with their natural liberty. By these, and all the other prophecies, which are in both testaments, it must be confessed, that these things were certainly foreknown, but where to found that certainty, cannot easily be resolved. Nor is it of any importance, whether we can resolve it, or no. The infinite perfection of the divine mind ought here to silence all objections. A clear idea by which we apprehend a thing to be plainly contrary to the attributes of God, is indeed sufficient ground to reject it. And therefore they think they are in the right to deny that God efficaciously determines men to sinful actions, because they apprehend it to be plainly contrary to justice, goodness and holiness : But if the objection against any thing supposed to be in God, lies only against the manner, and the unconceivableness of it, there the infinite perfection of God answers all. † It cannot therefore be so frightful a thing, to suppose God's foreknowledge of the most contingent future actions, well to consist with our ignorance how he foreknows them ; as that we should think it necessary to overturn and mingle heaven and earth, rather than admit it.

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† *Hewe*, Vol. II. p. 504.

It is further to be considered, § that this prescience does not make the effects certain, because they are foreseen ; but they are foreseen because that they are to be : So that the certainty of the prescience is not antecedent or causal, but subsequent and eventual.— Whatsoever happens was future before it happened ; and since it happened, it was certainly future from all eternity ; not by a certainty of fate ; but by a certainty which arises out of its being once ; from which this truth, that it was future, was eternally certain : Therefore the divine prescience being only the knowing all things which were to come, it does not infer a necessity of causality.

THE scripture plainly shews on some occasions a *conditionate prescience*, as in the case of the men of *Keilah*, of *Tire and Sidon*, *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Since then this prescience may be so certain, that it never can be mistaken, nor misguide the designs and providence of God ; and since by this, both the attributes of God are vindicated, and the undetermined freedom of the will of man to sin is asserted, all difficulties seem to be easily cleared this way.

THEY further add, that God having made man a free creature, his governing him accordingly, and making his own administration of the world suitable to it, is no diminution of his own authority ; it is only carrying on of his own creation, according to the several natures which he hath put in that variety of beings,
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of which this world is composed, and with which it is diversified. Therefore if some of the acts of God, with relation to man, are not so absolute as his other acts are, and as the *Supralapsarians* suppose necessary to the ultimate perfection of an independent being ; this arises not from any defect in the acts of God ; but because the nature of the creature, which he intended to make free, is inconsistent with such acts.

THE divine omnipotence is not lessened when we observe some of God's works to be more beautiful and useful than others are : And the irregular productions of nature do not derogate from the order in which all things appear lovely to the divine mind. So if that liberty with which God intended to endue thinking beings, is incompatible with such positive acts, and so positive a providence as governs natural things, and this material world ; then this is no way derogatory to the sovereignty of his mind. This also gives such an account of the evil which is in the world, as does no way accuse or lessen the purity and holiness of God : Since he only suffers his creatures to go on in the free use of the powers which he hath given them ; about which he exercises a special providence, making some men's sins to be the immediate punishment of their own, or of other men's sins ; and restraining them often in a great deal of that evil which they do design, and bringing out of it a great deal of good, which

which they did not design ; but never efficaciously determining them to design or act sinfully. *

THUS far the *Sublapsarians* evidently both admit and reject something of the schemes of both the other parties, and think that by doing so they come nearer the truth than either of them, and avoid the principal difficulties which attend them both.

3. THEY maintain that God's foreknowledge of futurities is always subsequent to his decree ; but that his decree does not give a futurition to many things that come to pass. They readily grant to the *Supralapsarians*, that there are a vast number of possible beings in the knowledge or understanding of God ; and that the decree appoints which of them shall be, and which shall not : for since the kingdom of God ruleth over all, so that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him ; it is impossible that any thing should ever come to pass, but what God is pleased, if not to effect, yet at least to permit. And if nothing can come to pass without the divine permission, then nothing can be known as future, but what God hath determined, at least to permit to be so, and so the foreknowledge of God will in all cases be founded either in his effective or permissive decree, and

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* N. B. Most of what is above extracted from Bishop Burnet, is by him urged in the name of the *Arminians*. But forasmuch as the *Sublapsarians* (at least the more moderate of them) agree in these things with the *Arminians* ; what is here alleged equally serves them, and accordingly I have so improved it.

be subsequent unto it: For it is impossible, that he who is able to prevent what he pleases, should know a thing will *actually* come to pass, without having first determined, at least, not to prevent it. And yet this is far from proving, that his decree gives a futurition to whatsoever comes to pass. For if the knowledge of God reaches to what rational agents will do, when he thinks fit to leave them entirely to the freedom of their own wills, without interposing *his* power to determine them one way or other; then there will be no need to suppose, that the decree of God gives futurition to all things whatsoever, because the certainty of the futurition of many things, may then be resolved into the *infallibility* of the knowledge of God, and not into the *efficacy* of his decree. — Again, if God often does think fit to leave rational agents entirely to the freedom of their own wills, and before never interposes his power to determine them to intrinsically evil actions; then we must suppose, that many things come to pass, which the decree does not give futurition to. For the *Supralapsarians* themselves don't suppose the decree to be the cause of the futurition of any thing, but what God in consequence of his decree, *efficaciously determines* his creatures to, in the course of his providence.

IN a word, both *Supra* and *Sublapsarians* are agreed, to distinguish the decrees of God into *effective* and *permissive*. The *effective* decree (say the *Sublapsarians*) puts a certain futurition into

into things ; but the *permissive* does not so. The *effective* decree may respect both *natural* and *moral good* ; the *permissive* decree principally regards *moral evil*, which God does not, either immediately or mediately, *effect* by his own power ; but only *permits* to the power of his creatures : having thought fit, for wise reasons, not always to hinder them (tho' many times he does) from abusing the powers he hath given them for better purposes, to the commission of it.—This distinction between an *effective* and *permissive* decree, they think, is rendered a *distinction without a difference*, by the *Supralapsarian* doctrines of *efficacious permission*, and *predeterminative concurrence* to actions intrinsically evil ; that God does by an efficacious power and influence move and predetermine men unto all their actions, even to such as have sin inseparably annexed to them ; that he does secretly, but effectually, incline and apply the wills of men to the entative acts of such things. For if these doctrines be true, the *Sublapsarians* think it will follow, that all the decrees of God are *alike absolute and effective*. Not to repeat here, that they think these doctrines to be founded upon *false principles*, and to be necessarily attended with *consequences too shocking to be endured* ; their reasons for both which I have given before.

4. THEY maintain, that the ordaining of certain men from eternity to condemnation was upon a foresight of their ungodliness and infidelity ; tho'

on the other hand, they deny that any were elected to everlasting life, upon a foresight of their faith and obedience. These two things they apprehend in their own nature to stand upon as different a foot as possible ; and to be every-where so represented in the scriptures. They think the scriptures all along represent the destruction of man to be of himself ; and never intimate his being determined by divine influence to any evil action. And they think it clear from scripture, that God knows what men will do, when left entirely to the freedom of their own wills : from whence they conclude, that God foresaw the apostasy of man, if left to the freedom of his own will, and thought fit so to leave him ; and that he foresaw the corruption which would follow upon the apostasy, that the wickedness of man would be great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart evil, and determin'd not to hinder it : but ordained certain men to that condemnation, which he foresaw they would deserve by their sins.

WHEREAS of his meer good pleasure he elected others, whom he foresaw would be alike involv'd in sin and guilt, to eternal life ; and entered into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of that state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a redeemer. Now forasmuch as they who are thus elected to everlasting life, are supposed to be really involved in sin and guilt with
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the rest ; and forasmuch as the scriptures represent eternal life itself, and all the things which *immediately* qualify and prepare men for it, such as *faith, repentance* and *new obedience*, to be not of men themselves, but the Gifts of God : therefore the *Sublapsarians* think it impossible that any should be elected to everlasting life, upon a foresight of their faith and obedience. For (say they) men cannot be elected upon a foresight of those things, which they would never have, if God had not tho't fit of his good pleasure to bestow them on them. So that while the *Sublapsarians* maintain, that certain men are ordained to condemnation upon a foresight of their wickedness and unbelief, they at the same time resolve the election of others principally into the good pleasure of the divine will. And in keeping this middle-way, they think they both follow the guidance of the scriptures, which always teach us to arrogate no good to ourselves, and do impute no moral evil to God ; and that they also secure the honor of all the divine attributes. For, on the one hand, no man can reasonably complain, either that he is left to the freedom of his own will, or that he is ordained to such condemnation, as God foresaw he would deserve, by his abuse of that freedom. Nor ought any man's eye to be evil, because God's eye is good. For may he not do what he pleases with his own ? And, if he thinks fit, may he not bestow *that* grace and favor upon some, which none deserve

serve, and which he might justly have withheld from all?—And again, on the other hand, what man can glory in the presence of the Lord, when the great things in which he is not as other men, are not of himself; but are the gifts of God?

BUT I proceed to say in the last place, that tho' the *Sublapsarians* hold, that God hath ordained certain men to condemnation upon a foresight of their ungodliness and infidelity, yet they maintain,

5. THAT *ungodliness and infidelity foreseen are not the proper causes, but only the antecedent conditions of reprobation.* Thus the celebrated *Turretine* * represents their sentiments, *Si absolute consideratur reprobatio rectè adscribitur corruptioni hominis nativæ, quæ eum effecit justè reprobabilem: si verò comparatè, ad solum Dei beneplacitum, &c.* “If (says he) Reprobation be considered *absolutely*, it is justly ascribed to man's native corruption, which hath rendered him a proper object of it; but if it be considered *comparatively*, it must be resolved entirely into the good pleasure of God, who according to his sovereign right and freedom, chooses whom he will and passes by the rest. If therefore it be enquired, *why this, or the other man was reprobated?* The answer is, *Because God foresaw that he would deserve it by his sins.* Not that sin is properly the cause of reprobation, for then
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' all must have been reprobated, who were alike
 ' sinners; but it is a condition or antecedent
 ' quality, by which a man becomes a proper
 ' object of reprobation: Or it is a cause *sine*
 ' *qua non*; for if a man had not been a sinner,
 ' he had not been reprobated of God; tho'
 ' every one be not necessarily reprobated, who
 ' is a sinner. But when the enquiry is, *why*
 ' *God hath reprobated this man, rather than the*
 ' *other*, when they were both equally sinners,
 ' and so alike proper objects of reprobation?
 ' *Here sin cannot be alledged*, because it is com-
 ' mon to them both; and what is common
 ' to them both, cannot (so far as we can see)
 ' cause a difference to be made between the
 ' one and the other.' And therefore no
 reason can be rendered by us for it in many
 cases, besides the mere sovereign pleasure of
 God, *even so Father, for so it hath seemed good*
in thy sight. I say in many cases, because it
 appears in fact from many instances, that such
 persons as seemed to men the most unlikely,
 nevertheless belonged to the election of grace.
 For there have been not a few Instances of
 very profligate sinners, who like *Manassah*
have wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord,
to provoke him to anger; and yet, thro' the
 mercy and grace of God, have been stopped
 in their career, to their own destruction, and
 made to all appearance, sincere penitents,
 and sound believers.

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AND yet all this don't hinder, but that far the bigger part of those who attain the mercy of God unto eternal life, may have been chosen to it, upon a foresight not of their faith and repentance, but of their diligent improvement of the means of grace, and earnest prayer for the aids of God's holy Spirit. And so notwithstanding any thing in the decrees of God, there may be a certain connection between *striving to enter in at the strait gate, and admission into it.* For our blessed Lord himself hath assured us, that if earthly parents *who are evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children*; MUCH MORE shall our heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him? And the wisest of meer men, under the inspiration of him whose understanding is infinite, hath said; *If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.* Prov. II. 3, 4, 5.

THE END.
